



*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*  
*Executive Office of Energy and Environmental*  
*Affairs*  
*100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900*  
*Boston, MA 02114-2119*

Deval L. Patrick  
GOVERNOR

Timothy P. Murray  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

Ian A. Bowles  
SECRETARY

Tel: (617) 626-1000  
Fax: (617) 626-1181  
<http://www.mass.gov/envir>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Date: July 21, 2008

Contact: Kristen Tikonoff  
(617) 626-1809

**Patrick Administration Officials Announce \$500,000 Increase for  
Senior Citizen Nutrition Program**  
*2,000 additional low-income and home-bound seniors will receive farmers'  
market vouchers due to increased funding in US Farm Bill*

WORCESTER – A \$500,000 increase in a state-run program that provides coupons redeemable at the Commonwealth's 155 participating farmers' markets will extend benefits to approximately 2,000 more low-income and home-bound senior citizens, Secretary of Elder Affairs Secretary Michael Festa and Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR) Commissioner Doug Petersen announced today.

The increase, made possible through the recently-enacted US Farm Bill and announced today at the Worcester/Westside Farmers' Market, will bring the total number of senior citizens served by the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program to over 25,000 statewide. The discount nutrition program is administered jointly by DAR and the Executive Office of Elder Affairs.

"This program helps senior citizens afford fresh, healthy, Massachusetts-grown produce," said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Ian Bowles, whose office includes the DAR. "With the increase we're announcing today, the Commonwealth can offer this important benefit to significantly more people – something we wouldn't have been able to do if it wasn't for our Massachusetts Congressional Delegation, who helped secure this funding."

The U.S. Farm Bill recently passed by Congress and signed by the President increased the federal grant for the Massachusetts Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program from \$55,915 to \$555,915. In addition DAR contributes \$50,000 to the program and Elder Affairs donates \$95,000. This substantial increase in federal funding will raise the current benefit per senior citizen from \$10 to \$30. In addition, about 2,000 more seniors will be served this year.

"It is reassuring to utilize such a significant increase to the nutrition program for seniors. This is a time when food and fuel expenses are increasing and, for some, increasing beyond affordability. Elder Affairs recognizes that farmers' markets are excellent sources for fresh produce for our seniors," said Michael Festa, Secretary of the Executive Office of Elder Affairs.

Working with 27 elderly nutrition programs statewide, senior citizens receive coupons to purchase produce at local farmers markets. To qualify for the coupons, the seniors have to be considered low-income or require home delivery of produce because they're designated home bound for various reasons.

Today's announcement came as part of DAR Commissioner Doug Petersen's summer-long farmers' market tour, highlighting the importance of buying local.

"We are very pleased to have received additional funding from USDA for the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program," Commissioner Petersen said. "This will allow us to not only serve additional elders but to also increase the benefit level to enable participants to purchase more fresh, locally grown produce direct from local farmers."

Also participating in today's announcement were:

- Gordon Hargrove, Executive Director, Friendly House, Worcester
- Robert Canavan, Acting Regional Administrator USDA Food and Nutrition Service (Northeast Region)
- Senator Edward Augustas
- Representative Robert Spellane
- Representative James O'Day
- A Representative from Congressman McGovern's Office
- Julie Jacobson, Assistant City Manager for Worcester
- Jodi Wood, Elder Services of Worcester Area
- Andy O'Keefe, farmers' market manager